

Central MRS Meeting Notes
August 25, 2007
Guilford DSS

Counties Present: Alleghany, Chatham, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Moore, Person, Rockingham, Rowan, Stokes, Vance, Yadkin.

Introductions

News from Raleigh

Fish Principles – from the MRS Institute

DV Policy

CFTs During Assessment: When, Why, How, Fidelity to Model

Goals for Coming Year

News from Raleigh

- Mentioned the topics of the DCD letters that have come out since we last met.
 - One that details new legislation that affects CPS
 - One refers to policy around infants born to incarcerated mothers
- Planning for the PIP continues, we have sent the draft. But we have found out that we will not have feedback before the drop dead date.
 - We had a request approved for technical assistance yesterday. We will look at everything about our system. Also will be looking at training needs of supervisors and social worker retention. Candice has volunteers from the 3 counties that were part of the review as well as some from small as well as large counties.
 - Some major themes are:
 - Interagency collaboration
 - Cultural Competence
 - Accountability
 - How we work with courts
 - How we engage our families during in-home services
 - Our in-state CFSR is undergoing a change as well
 - Our reviewers are going to Atlanta to be trained by the Feds
- Esther will be retiring as Interim Section Chief in November.
- Nicole gave update on Duke evaluation. Have selected the 10 new counties, Jackson, Haywood, Iredell, Chatham, Durham, Harnett, Brunswick, New Hanover, Pasquotank, Alexander.
 - Will continue to do the county fact sheets. Next month will review the template that they used for the original 10.
 - Will do the focus groups again as well as the family phone interviews
 - Will also do a new survey regarding CFTS – knowledge and satisfaction of participants, level of participation by those at the meetings.

Fish Principles – Had a speaker at the MRS Institute that talked about these principles.

- Play
 - Do some extra things around the office that are kinda fun!
- Choose your Attitude
 - Make a conscious effort to have a good attitude – its too hard to stay in a bad mood
- Make their Day!
 - Do something that makes someone's else's day – it will probably make yours too!
- Be there
 - When you have a million things going on at home or at work, it may be hard, but you need to be there for the person that is in front of you right now.

DV Policy – Policy, Challenges, CFTs

Rick Zeckman talked about DV policy.

- DV is all about the power and control, and use of fear in an intimate relationship.
- What are some things to look for? For example: a lot of holes in the walls where the perpetrator hit the wall right next to her head and said “next time that will be your head”, using the children to keep the victim parent in line, the perpetrator may call in the report themselves because they sense that the victim parent may be getting ready to leave, minimizing, blaming the non-offending parent, abusing/killing pets.
- Rethink how we look at the non-offending parent. Sometimes it is easy to see them as a doormat at first, how did you allow this to happen. Reframe that and see them as a survivor, and someone who may have taken the abuse to protect their children.
- There is often confusion about relationship discord and true DV. Not all fighting in a home is DV. It has to be tied to power, control, intimidation and fear - just a fight is not necessarily DV.
- At the point of intake, depending on who is calling the report in, you don't know if it is DV or discord. Unless they have been out there a bunch and know the whole situation, the police often don't know. They are focused on determining if a crime has been committed. They will tend to call it DV because that is what we have trained them to do. However, when CPS gets there, they may discover that it is truly discord. However Grandma might be able give more information at intake than law enforcement because she has been more involved. She may say “he has been controlling her since she was 18” or have more in depth information.
- Use the DV screening tool to determine if DV occurred – intake is important to determine if we can accept the report based on the statutes. It will be important for the intake workers to understand the Wheel of Power and Control so they can better determine when it is appropriate to become involved even if the violent act has not occurred. (Intimidation and threats to life with a weapon even if there has not been physical contact yet.)
- An incident of DV in and of itself with no harm to children is not an accepted CPS report. That is a law enforcement issue.
- We (CPS) cannot solve every problem out there. How is this DV affecting the safety of the children? (If its mom's boyfriend who does not meet the definition of caretaker it may not be a CPS issue.)
- The treatment is really different if you are talking about DV or just familial discord.

- You would not expect the non-offending parent to go to treatment with the perpetrator of Domestic Violence. Same thing with CFTs and case plans. You want to allow the non-offending parent and children work on those plans safely.
- CFTs – what are things you can do at the CFT if they do both want to meet together?
 - If they say they want to meet together but there is a 50B maybe she doesn't really want to meet with him, but wants him to think that she does. DSS doesn't want to get involved with violating a court document.
 - Law enforcement in the room or nearby.
 - A room where you can exit easily.
 - Strategic seating – do not seat the 2 people near each other or directly across from her. Have her supports sit near her and have him at the other end of the table.
 - Co-facilitator – someone who can keep an eye on the non-verbal communication between the perpetrator and the non-offending parent – can even arrange a hand signal from the non-offending parent to the co-facilitator if she starts to feel unsafe.
 - Don't hold the CFT if you feel that is not safe to do so, document why you did not in your records.

CFT during the assessment

Holly is part of a national workgroup that will be meeting in Denver on 9/27. 15 people from all over the nation on this committee (also from Ontario and New Zealand.) They will be developing a blueprint around best practice for these types of meetings. Hopefully when she comes back there will be a draft of this blueprint, and she will probably bring it to MRS meetings for feedback and also have a workgroup to discuss it.

Want to discuss using CFT during the assessment phase.

- Started by polling - some people at this meeting do hold CFTs during the assessment but not frequently.

What makes you want to hold them during the assessment?

- Usually when the school system is involved, an advocacy type thing.
- They can be effective as a pre-petition meeting because people show up that you may not have known about and are willing to take a child.
- Brings all professionals together to figure out why family not getting services that they have been court ordered.
- To stop he said/she said and get everyone together. Gets everyone together and lets everyone hear the same thing and everyone is accountable for their piece – good for fact finding – but is this really the goal of the family? Yes, can be because if the family is sick of DSS coming out, they want to get things out in the open to resolve the issues.

Be careful in what you are calling a CFT. If it is the Division's meeting to meet one of their goals, it is not a CFT and every time more than 2 people meet, it is not a CFT - CFTs are for the family.

- There are several different types of meetings based on the purposes of the meetings. There are some meetings that are called because the agency has to accomplish something (pre-placement) rather than being primarily for the family like a CFT.
- The key is to maintain the same principles, allow the families to bring supports, and be family centered, even if it is not a CFT per se.

- Be very clear before the meeting about the primary purpose of the meeting. Is this to do your case plan, to determine if we will seek custody of your child, etc. Families don't know the difference between the acronyms – they just want to know the purpose of the meeting and they will know how they were treated.
- Guilford has a committee (consisting of administration and line staff) that meets monthly and evaluates their practice around meetings.

What else would you like Holly to take to this meeting?

- Feel that it is always best to have a neutral facilitator. No matter if you are the best social worker in the world, it is hard to wear the hat of social worker and facilitator and the families see that as well.
 - Curious if it works any different to have a full time facilitator that is still employed by DSS as opposed to contracting with an outside agency.
 - Easier to deal with outside agency when you have the meetings planned out long term for 215 or 109, but if you have a 'emergency' one in 210 with short turnaround then an outside agency may not have any availability.
 - Some counties have facilitators on their staff but those people have different lines of supervision than the social workers.
- Casey believes that community partners need to be at the table to help families build a bank of resources and make them less dependent on DSS. This is a struggle to accomplish oftentimes.
- One Church One Child – Rowan has someone who recruits churches to do a lot of different things (clean a house, be a community partner at a CFT, offer slots at a day care center). This has helped a lot with the Hispanic population.
- Confidentiality is still an issue at the meetings. What about drug use and history. Holly said that most of this can probably be addressed with proper preparation for the meetings and let the family know who would be there and what they might not want to say in front of certain other participants. Also, it is possible that some people outside the family (particularly some other professionals) may not need to be there the whole time. Have the first part of the meeting with one group, and then some folks may be able to be excused.
- Straight talk – anything that anyone has to say needs to be said in the meeting. Don't let other participants pull DSS aside and tell us what the situation is and expect us to tell the family. Grandma, the schools, etc. have to share whatever with the group at the meetings, not have pre-meetings, after-meetings etc. One of the hardest things to do is to really communicate this with your community partners and then follow through with it so that they will do it.
- Rebecca Huffman passed out a brochure regarding the System of Care Conference. There is training on meetings available upon request.

Goals for the coming year – where would you like to see yourself or your agency

- Holly's goal is to do some of the fine tuning. For the most part people "get it" now. Need to do the fine tuning of the details, including bringing Foster Care into the mix.
- Increased focus on Shared Parenting it can be such a good thing.
- More buy-in from your county to hold meetings.
- Strengthening involvement with Work First.
- Hoping to make CFTs more useful in keeping children out of foster care, or, when children have to come into care, making Shared Parenting more successful.

- Nicole wants to do a better job of including the line social workers, getting their input, and help them understand the data – what it means and how it can help their practice.
- Candice mentioned the county experiences report. There is a wealth of information on there that can really help them.
- Improving and strengthening in-home services.

Next meetings:

Central:

October – Alamance Agricultural Ext. 17th

November – Rowan Co Library 27th

Western:

Remainder of Western meetings at AB Tech

October - Wednesday 31st

November - Friday 30th

Eastern:

October – Wilson Co DSS 25th

November – Hertford Co 28th